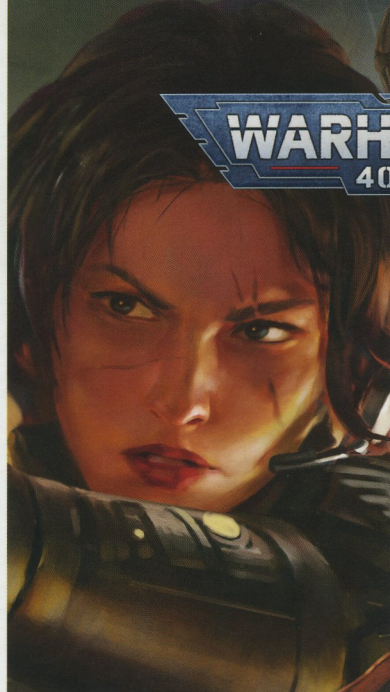
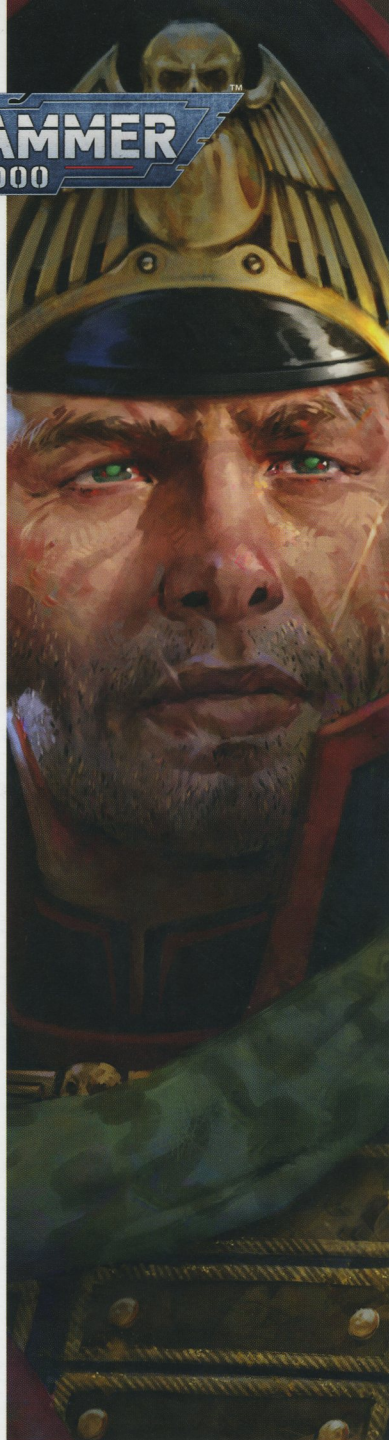




WARHAMMER
40,000



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and the world of Warhammer 40,000 at

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‘Don’t judge a book by its cover.’

It’s a familiar idiom that definitely has its heart in the right place, but when it comes to the actual practice of publishing, the above statement doesn’t quite ring true.

The cover is often the first interaction that readers will have with a novel. It is one of the publisher’s best methods of grabbing your attention in a busy bookstore, or in the ever-changing and massive digital marketplace. They vary wildly from publisher to publisher, but Black Library novel covers have a style all of their own, which has developed organically along with the Warhammer 40,000 setting, and the visuals created by the Games Workshop studio.

Artwork has always played a key role in Warhammer 40,000. Since the tabletop game’s first edition launched in 1987, the rulebooks and codexes have been beautifully illustrated with evocative imagery of the factions, conflicts and futuristic vistas within the setting. Those art pieces support the rules and background material. They bring the fantastical, extraordinary characters and locations created by the studio writers and miniatures designers to life through the medium of art, and are a key means by which

gamers and readers come to understand the uniquely dark and gothic mood and tone of the setting.

Black Library’s remit is to delve deeply into that setting, crafting stories that both respect the legacy of Warhammer 40,000 and contribute to it. Black Library guides authors to create memorable, complex characters who propel their narratives and who live on in the minds of readers long after the end of their story. The remit of a Black Library cover is to capture and convey all of this. To distil the complexity of a character and their narrative arc into a single, definitive image that draws on the visual language of Warhammer 40,000 and communicates its mood and tone to a potential reader, even at a glance. Which is no small feat. Each project within these pages is an example of this in action – a testament to the skill and dedication of Black Library’s cover artists, and their fantastic contributions to the world of Warhammer 40,000. And we are proud of every single one of them.

Which is why we are quite happy for you to judge our books by their covers.

The Black Library team



Knights of Caliban by Lie Setiawan

THE ADEPTUS ASTARTES







The Adeptus Astartes

Arguably the most recognisable and iconic of the Warhammer 40,000 factions, the Adeptus Astartes are absolutely core to Black Library, both in terms of storytelling and artwork.

Space Marine stories are grand and epic. They capture the heroism of mankind's most stalwart defenders, which means that the book covers representing those stories need to do the same thing. One of the main considerations we have when commissioning a piece of artwork for a novel focusing on Space Marines is the mood and tone of the piece. Space Marine covers should have a certain gravitas – the figures should be upright and strong, even in the face of overwhelming odds. You should be able to feel the character's weight and power, and most importantly their *story*. Be it through battle damage or battle scars,

our aim with a novel cover is always to convey the many conflicts, trials and formative events that the cover can't show you – the ones that have forged the character into who they are.

Another important aspect of commissioning artwork of Space Marines is that of visual legacy. There are design cues visible in a Primaris Space Marine that can be traced right back to the Space Marine designs seen in *Rogue Trader*. From the shape of the shoulder pads to the backpack silhouette, to the curve of the chestplate, to the heraldry and application of colour – every element of Space Marine armour is a crucial visual touchstone that speaks to the history of Warhammer 40,000 and the enduring designs originated in the Citadel Miniatures range.











Nightbringer (Black Library Classics edition) by Nicolas Delort. Nicolas Delort's unique and beautiful scratchboard artworks lent a unique look to the Black Library Classics range, representing well-loved characters as they had never been seen before.























Johan Grenier's Space Wolves portraits, commissioned for David Annandale's audio boxed set *Saga of the Beast*, are absolutely packed with character. Both Alrydd and Sigurd are laden with extra details – furs, totems and old scars, all of which serve not just to make the characters feel unique, but also to suggest their long careers in service to their Wolf Lord, Ragnar Blackmane.

(above, top) *Sigurd the Wolf Priest, of the Space Wolves* by Johan Grenier

(above) *Alrydd the Bard, of the Space Wolves* by Johan Grenier





























FWLER



























CASE STUDY

Space Marine Conquests

Space Marine Conquests as a series has a very clear mandate. Much like its predecessor, Space Marine Battles, Conquests focuses on sweeping, large-scale conflicts where Space Marines are the key protagonists. When it came to the cover design though, we wanted to take a consciously different direction than we did with Space Marine Battles.

From the outset, we decided that Conquests covers should focus on a single Space Marine character who is emblematic of his parent Chapter, but who nonetheless looks like an individual, his armour decorated and sometimes damaged in a way that suggests his storied past. We wanted heraldic colours, and finely rendered details. A cinematic, punchy image that was representative of the big, bold stories told within.

With all of those considerations in place, it quickly became apparent that we were

already working with the perfect artist for the job – Neil Roberts.

Neil's work on the Horus Heresy series is iconic, taking in both apocalyptic battles and reflective character pieces. But it was not just Neil's Horus Heresy work that led us to this decision. In 2010, Neil illustrated a series of covers for Gav Thorpe's Path of the Eldar (shown here on pages 186–187). Those covers are entirely focused on the character concerned, depicting each figure in incredible, realistic detail, which was exactly our aim for Conquests.

The result is a series of eye-catching studies which convey precisely the traits mentioned at the top of this section – the strength, valour and most importantly *character* of the different Space Marine Chapters, boiled down into a single, representative figure.







CASE STUDY

Fist of the Imperium

It is not just Neil Roberts' ability to deliver highly rendered characters that makes Conquests stand apart from other Space Marine series within the Black Library Warhammer 40,000 range. It is his instinct for composition, and for colour, of which *Fist of the Imperium* is a perfect example.

The brief for *Fist of the Imperium* stated that we wanted to portray the central character, Imperial Fists Librarian Lydorran, against a backdrop suggesting underground tunnels

made of stone, which has been cleverly interpreted here as a tunnel mouth that frames his armoured form, allowing for a darker area behind the focal point of the art – Lydorran's face. The purple overtones in the lighting suffuse every element but Lydorran himself, allowing his heraldic Chapter colours to stand out at the same time as complementing them, which makes the character and his faction immediately recognisable, even at a distance.



Apocalypse by Neil Roberts. Only one Space Marine Conquests cover so far has 'broken the mould' of the original artistic guidelines, and that is *Apocalypse*. It was released to coincide with the Warhammer 40,000 expansion of the same name, so we wanted to adjust the parameters of our book cover to reflect the sheer scale of the story (and the tabletop game it represents!), by including three characters instead of one. The resulting cover art is deftly composed, allowing all three characters to shine against the strong blue background colour, all while keeping the main focus on the central figure: Imperial Fists Lieutenant Heyd Calder.





















CASE STUDY

Dawn of Fire: Avenging Son

Guy Haley's *Avenging Son* is the first novel in the Dawn of Fire series – a large scale multi-author series charting the earliest days of a major, galaxy-spanning timeline event: the Indomitus Crusade. Intended both as required reading for established fans, and as an entry point into Warhammer 40,000 for new readers, the cover illustration for *Avenging Son* had to capture the imagination of a wide gamut of people without compromising any of the visual touchstones that speak to the setting of Warhammer 40,000.

This process began with establishing a core concept for the series. We knew from the outset that we wanted Dawn of Fire to stand apart from other titles in the Warhammer 40,000 range. It needed its own look and feel, which had to work long-term, applying just as well to any subsequent books as it did to

Avenging Son. We wanted to reflect the series' scope, but more importantly its characters – the Indomitus Crusade is driven by a broad cast from different factions and origins, all of which offer a unique perspective on this vast military undertaking. This led us to the idea of a montage or movie-poster style approach with a split composition, which would allow us to incorporate not just detailed character portraits, but smaller figures depicted in action too.

Johan Grenier's artwork for *Avenging Son* elegantly distils these requirements into an engaging, beautifully detailed cover illustration that cleverly balances a complex cast and a striking, split colour palette, setting a unique and instantly recognisable visual style not just for Guy Haley's *Avenging Son*, but for the Dawn of Fire series as a whole.



Inquisitor Eisenhorn by Clint Langley

THE IMPERIUM OF MANKIND







The Imperium of Mankind

From the shadowy servants of the Imperial Inquisition to the mysterious scions of the Navigator Houses, the Imperium of Mankind is a vast and varied topic that exemplifies the gothic and dystopian nature of Warhammer 40,000. Aside from the Adepta Sororitas, it is the area of the setting in which faith, a concept that is fundamentally core to the aesthetic of Warhammer 40,000, is felt most keenly. The characters seen here all occupy quite different spaces within the society and worlds of Warhammer 40,000 – from the unknowable labyrinth of the Blackstone Fortress to the undercrofts of the Imperial Palace itself. But artwork that focuses on the Imperium of Mankind offers freedom to explore more than just the unusual physical spaces within

the setting. It is where you will find the most unusual *characters* too – those who, by and large, sit outside of the main thrust of the Imperial war machine, yet still fulfil roles that enable it to exist.

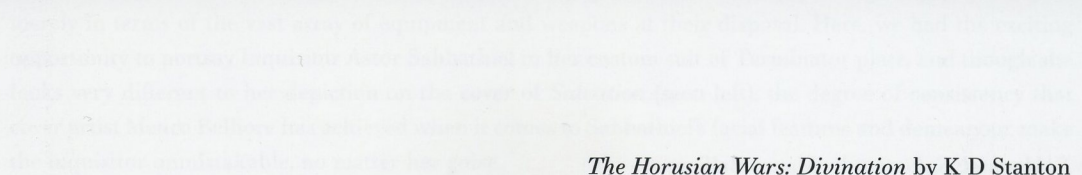
The cover artwork seen in this section varies widely in terms of style, from the punchy character-led compositions for the Agent of the Throne series to the stately and sinister artwork for *Rites of Passage*, but no matter how different the style of the art itself might be, the core aesthetic and tone of the characters always draws from the look and feel of Warhammer 40,000 as laid down in the original rulebooks and codexes by artists like John Blanche, Karl Kopinski and Adrian Smith.







The Horusian Wars: Incarnation by K D Stanton. We made a deliberate decision to use narrowed colour palettes on The Horusian Wars series, giving each novel in the series a dominant colour – burnished reds and oranges for *Resurrection* (see previous page), and cool blues for *Incarnation*. This same ethos carried over to the Agent of the Throne audio dramas (see page 94), and became a visual hallmark for The Horusian Wars as a whole.







Inferno! Volume 4 by Mauro Belfiore. One of the most interesting aspects of commissioning cover art featuring inquisitors is the ways in which they can change, whether that's psychologically, physically or merely in terms of the vast array of equipment and weapons at their disposal. Here, we had the exciting opportunity to portray Inquisitor Astor Sabbathiel in her custom suit of Terminator plate, and though she looks very different to her depiction on the cover of *Salvation* (seen left), the degree of consistency that cover artist Mauro Belfiore has achieved when it comes to Sabbathiel's facial features and demeanour make the inquisitor unmistakable, no matter her guise.



CASE STUDY

Eisenhorn: The Magos

The Magos was an interesting prospect from an art-commissioning perspective, as the book not only featured a brand new Eisenhorn novel (the titular *The Magos*) but also collected together all of Dan Abnett's existing Eisenhorn stories, resulting in a case-book which depicts the inquisitor at several different points in his long career. This led us to an interesting question when it came to the cover, of 'which' Eisenhorn we should depict. After a good deal of thought, we decided to create an 'out of time' representation of Eisenhorn that reflects the broad span of

his career, and reflects the most visually recognisable version of the character, carrying the runestaff made for him by Magos Geard Bure, and a darkly mysterious tome wrapped in chains. We wanted to capture not just core details seen on the original 54mm miniature, designed for the *Inquisitor* game, and the accompanying art by Adrian Smith (below left), but also the look and feel of the new Eisenhorn miniature (below right), which was in development in the Games Workshop studio at the time.

“*I'd rather go up against Ravenor unarmed than ever cross Gregor Eisenhorn.*”

One aspect of Eisenhorn's character that stands out from the first pages of *Xenos* to the last chapter of *The Magos* is his drive to accomplish his goals. He will simply not give up, even gravely wounded or declared Excommunicate Traitoris. To represent this on the model, I largely took inspiration from

the omnibus cover by Clint Langley (see page 74 – BL); I sculpted him striding with purpose, his glance and permanent scowl fixed on the quarry. Eisenhorn is also a complex and controversial character, so I used the scenery piece to represent him literally walking on the line that divides the Inquisition, between Puritan and Radical.

Maxime Corbeil, Sculptor





CASE STUDY

Once we had decided on the 'era' for our cover artwork, we had to pin down the composition and mood of the illustration. Given the sheer breadth of topics and locations covered in *The Magos*, we opted for a setting that was reflective of Warhammer 40,000 as a whole – a gloomy, decaying vista that blended both the gothic and the industrial.

Which just left us with Eisenhorn himself.

We knew from the outset that we wanted Eisenhorn to dominate the cover, so our brief asked not just for him to be large in frame, but for his distinctive armour, weapons and clothing to be the only source of saturated colour on the cover, with the background dropping away into desaturated tones. Separating the character from the background in this way gives a great clarity of silhouette, which is key for complex and visually interesting characters like Eisenhorn. A secondary benefit of this is that it effectively 'tunnels' the vision of the viewer, drawing their eye straight to the character.

The artist, Johan Grenier, provided a suite of thumbnails depicting Eisenhorn in various

different poses, but it was only after consulting Eisenhorn's creator, Dan Abnett, that the direction for the pose really crystallised – we needed Eisenhorn to look like a hunter, first and foremost. Like an unstoppable, intimidating *presence*. This meant turning his body near straight-on to make his silhouette as broad as possible, and focusing Eisenhorn's attention directly on the viewer, further strengthening the connection between character and reader.

The final artwork for *The Magos* is a true representation of all of Johan's strengths as a cover artist. It clearly captures Eisenhorn's severity and intensity, acknowledging the character's rich history through lavish detail – in particular the book Eisenhorn holds, wrapped in chains, the design of which was developed over several iterations to be evocative of the symbology of Chaos, without ever being overt. It is that sort of attention to detail that makes an image definitive, as well as a successful and memorable Black Library cover.











CASE STUDY

Agent of the Throne

Agent of the Throne was an interesting prospect from the outset. This series was fairly unusual in that it was effectively a spin-off – a series of stories focusing on a select cast of characters who found their origins in John French's *Inquisitor Covenant* series, *The Horusian Wars*. Because of this, we had two key goals in mind when commissioning cover art for the series – an approach that would make *Agent of the Throne* different from other audio drama series, but one that would also make it feel suitably connected to the novels. To this end, we decided to offer the project to *The Horusian Wars* series artist, K D Stanton. Artistic consistency is one of the best ways to tie a series together, and K D's innate ability to breathe life into a wide and diverse cast of characters proved invaluable on both the novel covers, and on those commissioned for the audio dramas.

The idea for the montage-style composition actually came from the script. *Agent of the Throne: Blood and Lies* (and indeed the sequels that follow it) is action-packed, but more than anything it is about engaging, well-drawn characters who live out their stories on a more gritty 'street' sort of level than a character like *Inquisitor Covenant* might. To reflect this, we chose to focus on the characters and their relationships with one another, evoking the classic, painted movie posters of the 1970s and 1980s through a Warhammer lens. We chose, too, to limit the colour palettes from audio drama to audio drama, much as we have on the covers for *The Horusian*

Wars novel series, creating another tacit connection between Ianthe's story, and that of her master – *Inquisitor Covenant*.

Focusing on characters meant defining them visually, and this was most crucial when it came to the series' protagonist, and narrator, Ianthe.

Ianthe is a pragmatic, direct character – an ex-soldier who served in the *Astra Militarum*. We wanted to capture this aspect of her previous life in her appearance, so we based her armour and clothing on a *Militarum* aesthetic, and then added an *Inquisitorial* edge, 'upgrading' Ianthe's gear to look a bit more high-spec than your basic infantry soldier, and hinting at her change in employment with the pendant she wears around her neck.

Agent of the Throne also allowed for something that doesn't crop up often, save for on long-running novel series, which was to adjust the look of the characters over time, or according to the direction of the story. Where *Agent of the Throne* is concerned, the visual change happens on the cover of the third audio drama, *Ashes and Oaths*, which sees Ianthe kitted out for stealth, Cull looking a good deal more tattered and torn, and Artabanus having been visibly upgraded. This aspect of the series is another great indicator of the cover artist's talents – though the characters might be dressed differently, they are still recognisably those same characters, and that is testament to K D's consideration for the specific details and personality quirks that make those characters who they are.















CASE STUDY

Watchers of the Throne: The Regent's Shadow

Watchers of the Throne is a series that focuses on characters, with Shield-Captain Valerian of the Custodian Guard and Witchseeker Tanau Aleya of the Sisters of Silence taking centre stage. When approaching the cover for the second book in the series, *The Regent's Shadow*, we decided to reinforce the character-focused aspect of the narrative through the choice of composition, depicting Valerian and Aleya fighting alongside one another, their stances reflective of their roles and personalities. Valerian's aspect is stoic, his posture balanced and level, while Aleya's is dynamic and active, her eyes narrowed in a fierce expression.

But Valerian and Aleya were not the only characters we considered when it came to *The Regent's Shadow*. Watchers of the Throne centres on the most critically important location in the Warhammer 40,000 setting: Terra, and the Throneworld is as much a character in Chris Wraight's novels as Valerian and Aleya themselves. With *The Regent's Shadow*, artist K D Stanton captures the crumbling grandeur of Terra in the same way that the novel itself does, depicting a proud and imposing setting that is at once majestic, and marred by war – threatened on all fronts by darkness.

“Working on these two characters was incredibly exciting. The main focus was trying to get across the two different personalities.

Aleya is a veteran of the Sisters of Silence, a fighter and hunter linked to the old order while, in opposition, Valerian is a young new recruit.

I have tried to identify the two characters with thematic standpoints: Valerian wears the wreath of Guilliman as a mark of honour, while Aleya wields a relic weapon, the blade marked 'Somnus', in honour of the first temple of the Sisterhood on Luna.

Valerian is depicted some time after the

final scene in the current novel, so his face is already scarred, while Aleya doesn't sit in a particular time frame, so I wanted to represent a purer female warrior archetype.

Their common themes are pride, combat doctrine and duty to the Emperor, which has been expressed in the statuesque upright pose that they both share.

It was great fun designing the bases, getting inspiration from different geometric circular pattern motifs, trying to represent what I imagined being different areas within the Inner Palace.

Samir Battistotti, Sculptor











Rites of Passage by Maria Zolotukhina. *Rites of Passage* offered the unique opportunity to represent the Imperium's Navigator Houses front and centre. Given the political and murky (and sometimes murderous!) themes of Mike Brooks' novel, we chose to approach the cover as if it were a commissioned family portrait, but one that contained hints as to the true, complex nature of the characters portrayed. Maria Zolotukhina's cover art is an exquisite piece of work that depicts the scions of House Brobantis in beautiful detail, as well as subtly referencing each character's own selfish intent.





THE ADEPTA SORORITAS



Sister Miriya, of the Adepta Sororitas by Hardy Fowler



The Adepta Sororitas

If the Adeptus Astartes represent the war-like aspect of Warhammer 40,000, then the Adepta Sororitas represent the setting's soul. Clad in ornate, gothic power armour, these warriors are the militant arm of the Imperial Church, and intrinsically linked to one of the core themes of Warhammer 40,000 – that of faith.

Battle Sisters are emblematic of the Imperium's will to defy its enemies – in particular, the dread forces of Chaos. When commissioning Sisters of Battle artwork, we often ask for the characters to be portrayed at the heart

of dramatic compositions, beset on all sides by enemies. But despite this, the Battle Sisters should always dominate the frame. They should be defiant and physically strong, their martial prowess clear to see in their posture, and their inviolate will evident in the expressions on their war-torn faces. The artwork itself should have a darker, more classical feeling in terms of the colours used, and the way in which the characters are depicted. A feeling that is reflective of the strong influence of the gothic and baroque on both Warhammer 40,000, and the Adepta Sororitas themselves.



CASE STUDY

Celestine: The Living Saint

The cover concept for *Celestine: The Living Saint* was conceived almost immediately upon discussion because of the content of Andy Clark's novel. *Celestine: The Living Saint* is the first novel to depict the tests of faith that Celestine must undergo in order to be reborn and serve again. It follows her arduous journey through a space between life and death, and the trials and temptations that she faces along the way. It is a style of storytelling that feels reminiscent of legends, and of classical, allegorical stories, so we wanted to take the same approach when it came to the cover too, creating an image of Celestine breaking free of her torturous limbo that felt reminiscent of a baroque painting – like something that you might see in-universe in the Ecclesiarchy palaces of Warhammer 40,000.

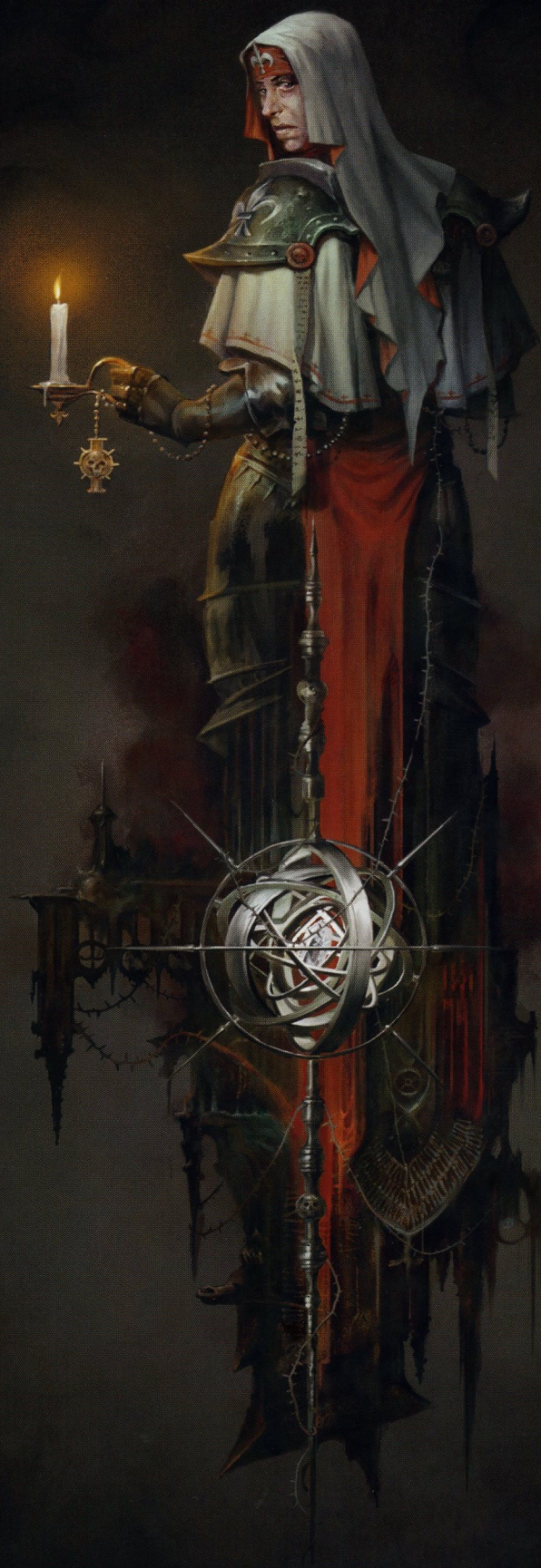
Given the nature of the novel, a deliberate decision was made to depict some elements symbolically, rather than literally, in order to best represent the metaphysical aspect of Celestine's story. For example, the saint is represented here with feathered wings, rather than

the jump pack worn by the miniature, and Celestine's Geminae Superior are represented by the two doves leading Celestine upwards and out of the grasp of daemons.

We were fortunate enough in this instance to work with Kevin Chin, who is employed as an artist by the Games Workshop studio. Kevin's artwork feels very much like traditional media painting, which made him the perfect candidate for this job, and he showed an innate understanding from the outset of what we had set out to achieve. Kevin made several deliberate artistic choices even at thumbnail stage that really evoked the feeling we were looking for, rendering the daemons in twisting, contorted poses, while Celestine herself is depicted as powerful and strong. The saint's golden armour is completely pristine, as are her wings, and her face is set in a beatific, yet solemn expression. Stylistically, the deep shadows, high reflections and rich colours all contribute to the mood of the piece, reinforcing both the baroque and allegorical aspect of the artwork.



(above, top) *Adamanthea, Dominion Superior of the Order of the Valorous Heart* by Rezunenکو Bogdan.
(above) *Augusta, Sister Superior of the Order of the Bloody Rose* by Grant Griffin.



Requiem Infernal by Marta Dettlaff. Peter Fehevari's novels are richly dark and complex, and it seemed only right to commission artwork which captured that tone. Marta Dettlaff's beautifully detailed cover illustration turns the city at the heart of the Koronatus Ring into a dark reflection of the book's protagonist, Sister Hospitaller Asenath Hyades, with the city spire itself taking on an unsettling, almost organic quality that perfectly evokes the disturbing puzzle at the heart of *Requiem Infernal's* narrative.



CASE STUDY

Mark of Faith

Mark of Faith takes place in the wake of the Great Rift, during the current timeline of Warhammer 40,000. In terms of the setting, this is mankind's darkest hour. The Imperium is divided, and Chaos is in ascendance, empowered by the destruction of Cadia. Our aim was for the cover of *Mark of Faith* to reflect that, showing the followers of Chaos rising up around the Battle Sisters and surrounding them on all sides, representing the resurgence of the Imperium's oldest and greatest enemy. But even surrounded by daemons, the Sisters of Battle still dominate the artwork. They are depicted in rich, warm tones, illuminated by the diffuse yellow light that is being emitted principally by the flamer, but also by the figures themselves. This contrast in colour is deliberate – it sets the Sisters apart from the daemons around them, and draws the eye inwards to the centre of the frame. It also makes the Battle Sisters the 'light in the darkness', a deliberate stylistic choice which refers back to their role in Warhammer 40,000, where they use the power of their faith to drive back the forces of Chaos, a role that has become even more critical in the aftermath of the Cicatrix Maledictum.

Mark of Faith was released to coincide with the brand new Adepta Sororitas miniatures

range, meaning it not only had to reflect the setting and themes of the novel, but also had to encapsulate the faction, representing the Sisters of Battle in a way that felt coherent with the visuals surrounding the materials launching from the Games Workshop design studio. Accuracy is always a key consideration for Black Library novel covers, but in this case it became even more important, with plenty of attention devoted to correctly representing the subtle and deliberate design choices made by the designers working on the miniatures range. The cover artist for *Mark of Faith*, Igor Sid, has made a whole host of contributions to codexes, battle boxes and rulebooks, which means that the mood, tone and stylistic quality sits this artwork seamlessly alongside the Sisters of Battle army box, and the codex. But principal in Igor's skill set is his ability to realise characters who look as though they have a story to tell. The Battle Sisters on the cover of *Mark of Faith* are expressive, and powerful. They are *warriors* – strong, scarred and tattooed, their power armour adorned with the kind of additional details that give Warhammer 40,000 characters a sense of history and life, and that make an illustration truly engaging.



Titanicus by Fred Rambaud

THE ADEPTUS MECHANICUS







The Adeptus Mechanicus

The Adeptus Mechanicus occupy a very different space to that of Space Marines, or Sisters of Battle. They are a cult of knowledge, jealously guarding the secrets of technology not just from mankind's enemies, but from other factions inside the Imperium.

Adeptus Mechanicus novels tend, for the most part, to explore the danger inherent in the acquisition of knowledge, and the risks that come from curiosity. This means that the novel covers are inherently less concentrated on war, and more on ambitious voyages of discovery (for better or worse). There is more than a little of the space opera in a good many Adeptus Mechanicus stories, and that is visible in the cover art commissioned for

them, with the settings of the stories taking almost as much of the focus as the characters themselves.

The Adeptus Mechanicus are also the faction in which the biological horror of Warhammer 40,000 is most keenly visible. A good deal of the central characters are something beyond human, their bodies augmented beyond recognition out of a desire for perfection, and a closeness to the Machine-God. Despite this, though, Adeptus Mechanicus stories are fundamentally human ones – following ambitious, sometimes blindly curious characters into darkneses unknown in the pursuit of answers.







CASE STUDY

Belisarius Cawl: The Great Work

Belisarius Cawl is an unusual character – an innovator inside the Adeptus Mechanicus, an organisation which as a whole generally works to maintain the Imperium's technological status quo. Because of Cawl's unique nature, it made sense to take a different approach when it came to the cover artwork for the first Cawl-centric novel, Guy Haley's *Belisarius Cawl: The Great Work*.

We wanted to capture a feeling of exploration and dark spectacle, which led us to look at classic science fiction novels of the 1960s as inspiration – it is a period in which science fiction was 'outward looking', and we wanted to evoke that same feeling for Cawl too, albeit through a Warhammer lens. What

this means in terms of the artwork is that the figures of Belisarius Cawl and his Primaris Space Marine bodyguard are shown relatively small in frame when compared to the landscape around them – the looming Mount Pharos, and the eerie, ravaged plains of the planet Sotha. This approach also lent the artwork a sense of mystery – Sotha is a prominent location in Warhammer 40,000, with a weight of history attached to its name, and Akim Kaliberda's cover artwork deftly offers the reader an atmospheric, evocative and melancholy look at this desolate world while conveying only the most subtle of hints as to Cawl's purpose in visiting it.











Caleb Cursebound by Giorgio Baroni

THE UNDERHIVE



The Underhive

Necromunda and its underhive is a unique prospect in terms of commissioning cover art for Warhammer 40,000. Focusing on more 'street-level' stories than the rest of the Warhammer 40,000 range means a different approach when it comes to cover artwork. One that focuses keenly on the individuals – who are, without exception, tough, clever (and sometimes downright vicious!) – who are taught to survive not by war, but by the industrial hellscape that they call home.

Necromunda novel covers are a clash of retrofuturistic influences and the frontiers of the Old West. The colours that the characters wear are bright and contrasting, like a wild animal's threat display, while their world is desaturated and dilapidated, collapsing around them in what might be the most honest representation of the state of the Imperium of Man.







CASE STUDY

Kal Jerico: Sinner's Bounty

Kal Jerico is a renegade. Once an uphiver, now a bounty hunter, Kal's legacy is one of double-crossing, mercenary contracts and dangerous (and often dirty) deals, and we were keen to reflect that gritty, underhive cowboy vibe with both pieces of artwork commissioned for *Kal Jerico: Sinner's Bounty*. Our intent for the limited edition version was to evoke a little of the Old West, depicting Kal Jerico as a gunslinger walking the dangerous, filthy 'streets' of his 'town'. Stylistically, we chose to embrace a touch of retrofuturism, taking influence from science fiction artwork from the 1970s and 1980s and applying that

to the dystopic and industrial setting of Necromunda. This was a complex brief, requiring a very specific approach, and we were fortunate enough to collaborate with science fiction illustrator Pascal Blanché, whose artistic style was a perfect fit. Pascal's high-fidelity approach to the setting detail and tightly focused colour palette gives the image a strong retro quality, while also incorporating subtle gothic-influenced elements, such as the embedded skulls and cables and the high archway framing Kal, that make the illustration unquestionably evocative of Warhammer 40,000.



CASE STUDY

Kal Jerico: Sinner's Bounty

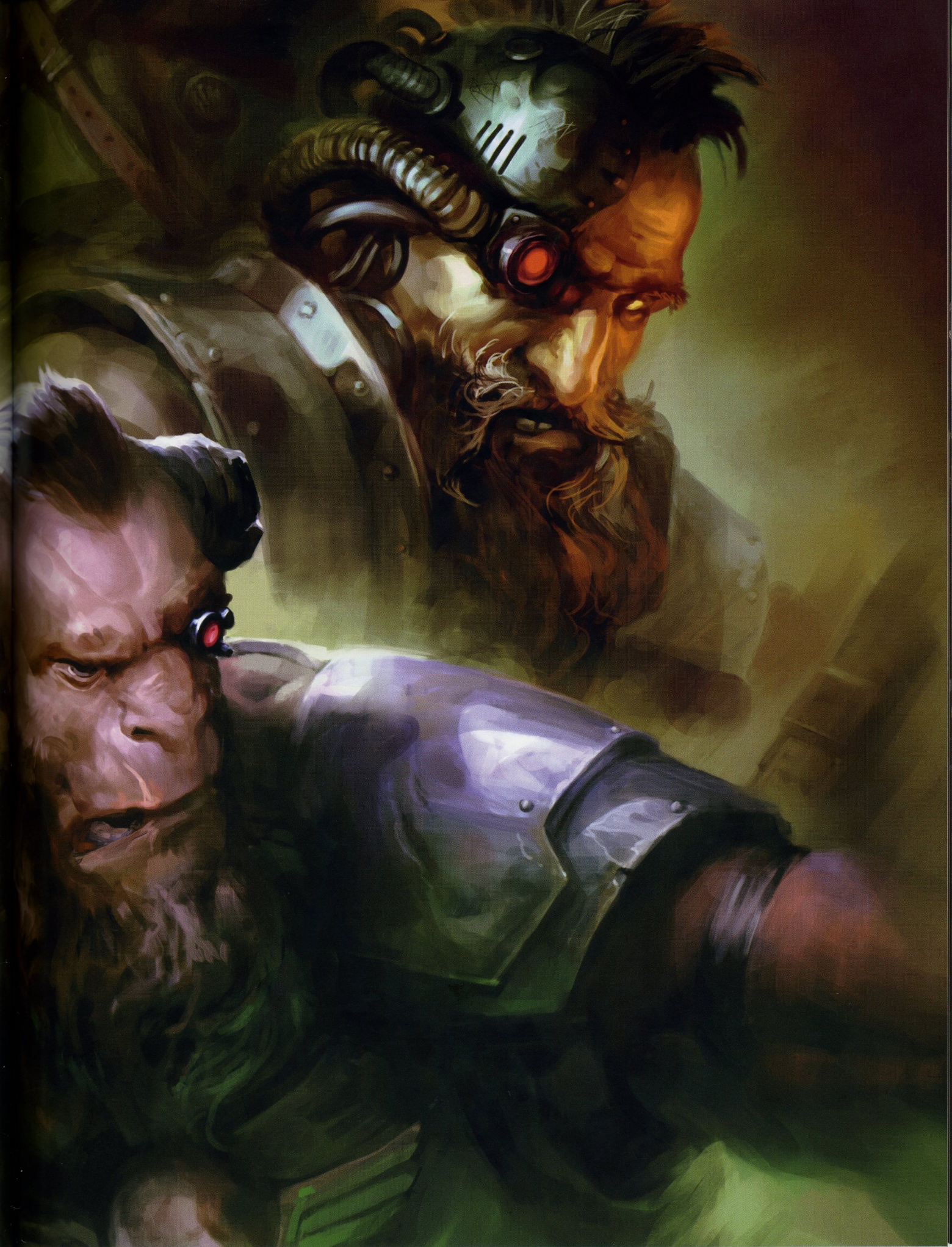
If the limited edition artwork for *Sinner's Bounty* was intended to evoke a sense of Necromunda, then the standard edition was all about Kal Jerico himself (which seems entirely appropriate, for a character like Kal...). The composition of Marta Nael's portrait might be very different to Pascal Blanché's work on the limited edition, but the influence of retrofuturism can still be felt in the punky, saturated colours. Here though, that influence is articulated through an impressionistic lens,

with the temperature and tone of the colours shifting in line with the ambient neons of the background to evoke a gritty, underhive mood. Marta's depiction of Kal himself is wonderfully sympathetic to the original *Warhammer Monthly* comic strips (illustrated in the main by Karl Kopinski), and absolutely captures Kal's character – with a wry hint of a smile, and his finger on the trigger of his trusty laspistol.









THE DREAD FORCES OF CHAOS



Honsou, Warsmith of the Iron Warriors by Lie Setiawan



The Dread Forces of Chaos

Chaos is the grandest and most ancient enemy of mankind, personified by corrupted cultists and militia; by unknowable, maddening daemons; and by the ancient, vengeful legionaries known as the Heretic Astartes – Chaos Space Marines.

Black Library covers that focus on the followers of the Dark Gods vary in style, but they all aim to embrace the complexity of Chaos, both thematically, and in terms of how the characters look. Chaos characters should be dark mirrors to their opposite numbers within the Imperium. They should be laden down with heretical iconography, cruel weaponry and grisly trophies (unless, of course, they are aiming to blend in, like the Alpha Legion...). This visual acknowledgement of their alignment is particularly important where Chaos

Space Marines are concerned. Like their Imperial counterparts, Chaos Space Marines are invariably depicted as strong and resilient, but they are otherwise a twisted reimagining of their erstwhile brothers, their armour corrupted and reshaped by their time spent in the warp, and their helmet lenses glowing with an eerie light. Where loyalist Space Marines are heroic defenders, Chaos Space Marines are domineering – they are conquerors. Like all Chaos-aligned characters, Chaos Space Marines are intended to be menacing, even when they are at the centre of their own story. Never sympathetic characters, they are, however, fundamentally complicated and interesting, driven by bitterness and hatred to bring ruin to a galaxy that they have long since left behind.











CASE STUDY

The Lords of Silence

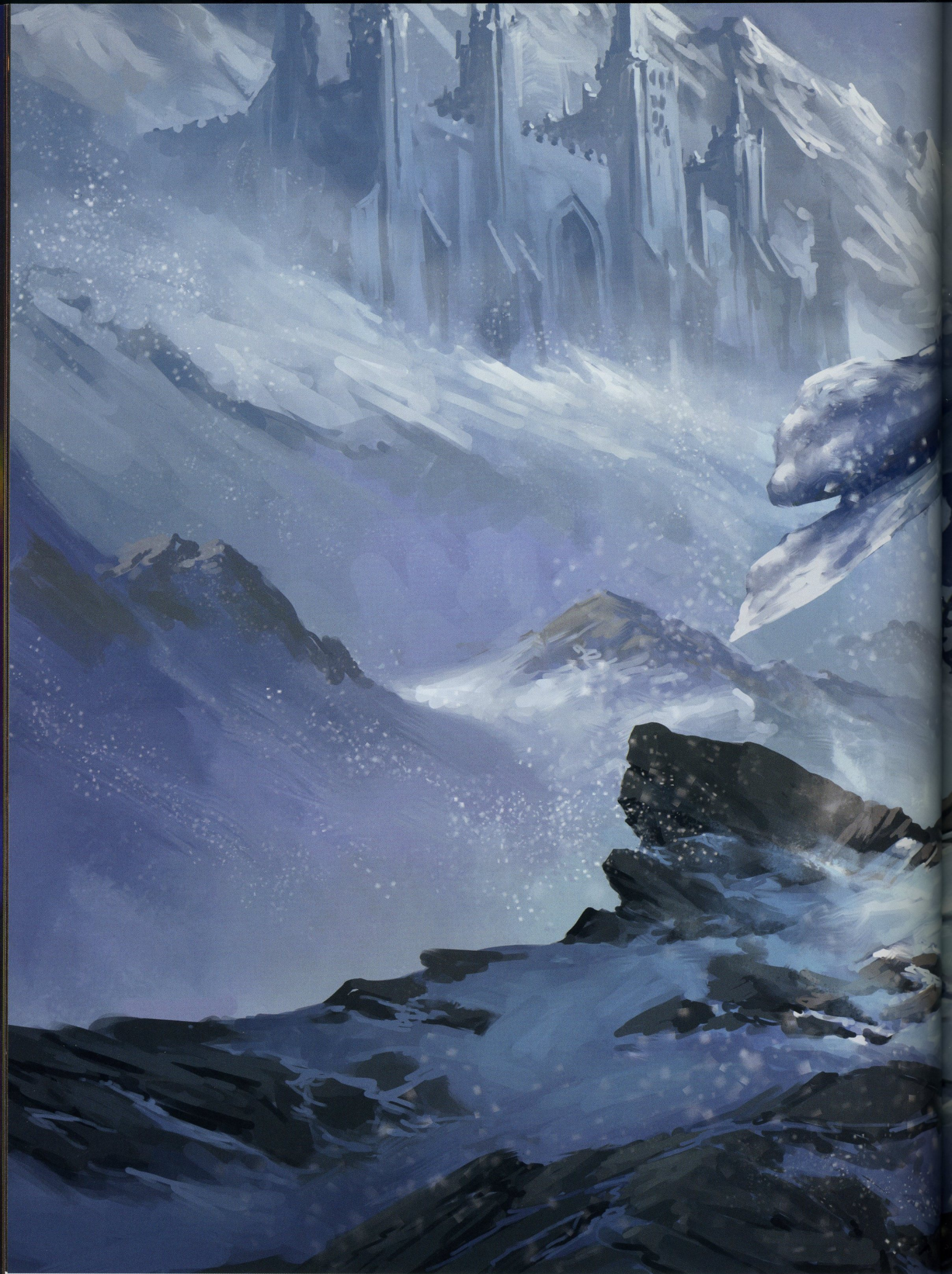
The Lords of Silence was the first book to focus on the Death Guard in the modern timeline of Warhammer 40,000. Launching in the wake of the Gathering Storm, and set firmly in the new and much darker Imperium, the cover had to be emblematic of the faction, depicting characters who represented both Chris Wraight's cast and the new miniatures range from the Games Workshop studio.

From the outset, we knew that we wanted this cover to subtly incorporate the three-lobed icon of Nurgle through the relative position of the characters, and for the characters themselves to be loaded with grisly details suggestive of their long years spent in the warp.

Johan Grenier's cover artwork absolutely delivers on this concept, not only arraying the three characters to evoke the icon of Nurgle, but also framing them with a spiked, circular

wheel laden with skulls. The Death Guard are a disturbing, complex mixture of organic and synthetic, their armour plate distended and streaked with dirt and gore in a way that makes them look ancient, which is very important for Chaos Space Marines in general, and even more so for Death Guard.

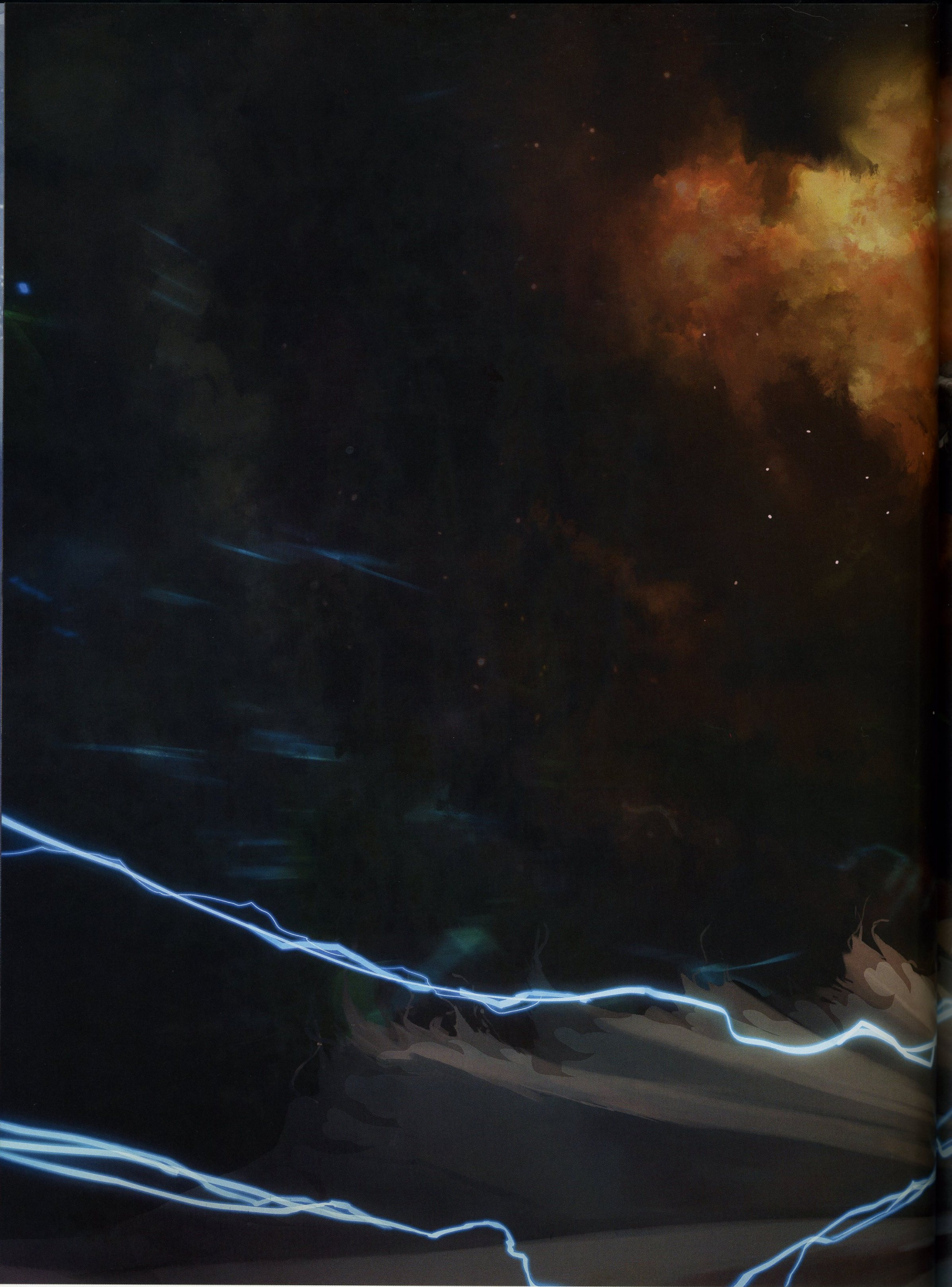
It is a testament to Johan's skill as a cover artist that although the characters themselves are complex, and the cover makes use of a fairly limited colour palette, they still stand in stark relief from the background, the rich brass and green tones of their armour visually lifting them against a less saturated backdrop that is partially occluded by mist. This is a clever artistic choice in that the mist feels completely in keeping with the Death Guard as a faction, but also serves as a way to centre the viewer's attention on the characters in all of their monstrous detail.



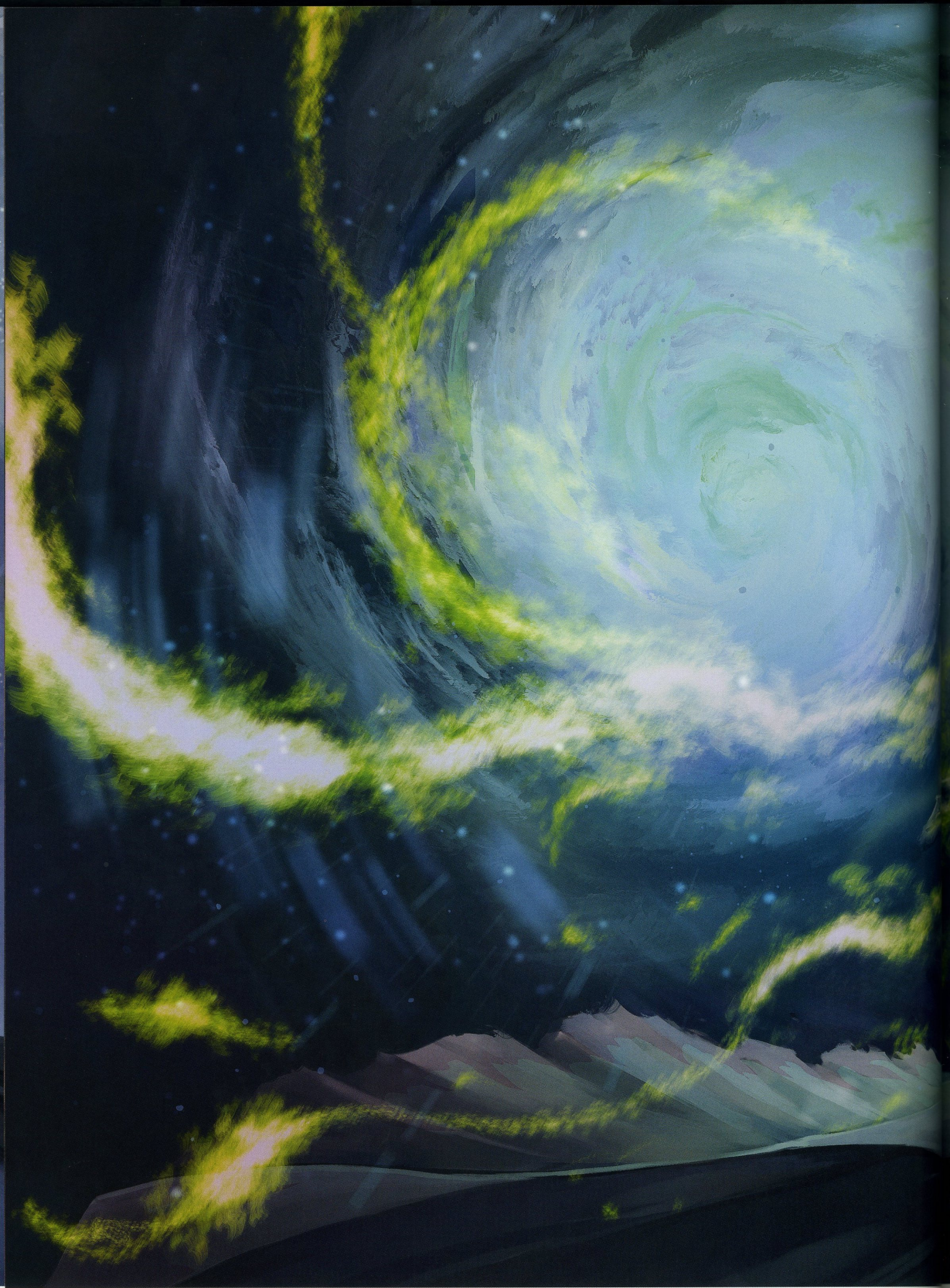
































Path of the Warrior by Neil Roberts

THE REMORSELESS XENOS







The Remorseless Xenos

If the forces of Chaos are mankind's oldest enemy, then the xenos races are its most diverse, and numerous. The term 'xenos' is broad by its nature – a catch-all term used by the Imperium of Mankind to label that which it does not understand, encompassing species as diverse as the rampaging, war-hungry orks, and the otherworldly, inscrutable aeldari.

When commissioning cover art focusing on xenos factions, our main goal is to typify the faction concerned, capturing their key traits and most recognisable visuals. Every xenos race in Warhammer 40,000 has a long history associated with it, and a very deliberate set of aesthetic choices. For example, the orks are anarchic, and unpredictable, which means that cover artwork for ork stories is dynamic

and active, embracing the larger-than-life aspect of the faction as written in the codex. Contrary to this, an aeldari-focused cover should feel considered and almost stately, the characters representing the keen, swift and exacting nature of a race who are long-lived enough to become masters of the many crafts of war.

Each xenos-focused book presents us with a chance to draw on decades of complex and deep lore for the factions concerned, as well as offering an opportunity to consider new and different ways to represent those factions, whether that be through the artwork's composition, colour palette or the stylistic approach of the artists themselves.







CASE STUDY

Rise of the Ynnari: Ghost Warrior

Rise of the Ynnari presented an exciting opportunity with regard to cover commissioning. It was the first book to focus on Yvraine and the Visarch, two aeldari characters introduced during the Gathering Storm as emissaries of Ynnead – the aeldari God of the Dead.

Aeldari-centric covers allow us to take a different approach than we might with a more Imperial-focused piece. The characters are leaner, with an alien sort of grace that is communicated not just through their build and posture, but through their armour and weapons, too, incorporating gentle curves and lightweight, sculpted plates that are very different from any equivalent seen in the Imperium of Man.

Yvraine and the Visarch are relatively new characters in terms of the Warhammer 40,000 timeline. They are neither classified as Asuryani or as drukhari, occupying somewhat of a space in between the two. Their visuals seamlessly incorporate keystone elements of both factions – the flowing cloth and decor

on Yvraine's bodice is evocative of miniatures like the Asuryani spiritseers and warlocks, while the Visarch's armour is reminiscent not just of the drukhari incubi, but also of Asuryani Aspect Warriors. Capturing all of those very particular features, as well as an alien grace, is what makes for a great piece of aeldari artwork.

Anna Lakisova's cover artwork for *Ghost Warrior* does just that, rendering Yvraine and the Visarch in exquisite detail, with careful attention paid to the characters' armour plates and weapons to capture those organic and very particular curved shapes. Anna captures Yvraine's grace deftly through the tension and poise in her figure, while the Visarch maintains an elegant, upright swordsman's posture. The cool colours and softer, more painterly shapes that surround the characters allow Yvraine and the Visarch to stand out in stark relief, while also evoking a sense of the otherworldly, dreamlike quality of the setting – a mysterious aeldari craftworld.



CASE STUDY

Rise of the Ynnari: Wild Rider

Wild Rider gave us an opportunity to focus not just on Yvraine and the Visarch, but also to represent other aeldari characters and factions, too. In the main, this applies to the Wild Riders themselves, represented here by Nuadhu Fireheart, one of Saim Hann Craftworld's Wild Lords. Fireheart makes an interesting counterpart to Yvraine – he and his fellow aeldari of Saim Hann Craftworld are daring, aggressive and proud, and we wanted Fireheart to embody that spirit in his posture and facial expression, while Yvraine by

contrast remains statuesque, her own ferocity much more measured and cold.

The novel takes place on a maiden world, which offered up a rare chance to explore rich naturalistic colours, depicting a striking vista of vibrant grasses, trees and a wide blue sky (there are even flowers!). As with the first novel, *Ghost Warrior*, the unusual setting helps to set this series apart from other Warhammer 40,000 series, and even from other aeldari novels, giving *Rise of the Ynnari* a distinct look and feel all of its own.



Path of the Seer by Neil Roberts. Neil Roberts' artwork for the *Path of the Eldar* novels make deft use of white space, resulting in clean and elegant covers that put all of the focus onto the principal characters, portraying the Warrior, Seer and Outcast in brilliant detail.











Path of the Dark Eldar by Neil Roberts. The *Path of the Dark Eldar* series acted as a dark mirror for its aeldari counterpart, so it made sense for the covers to do the same. Where the aeldari characters are rendered in rich key colours, their drukhari equivalents are dark, gothic and vicious, and truly representative of the Dark City of Commorragh and its citizenry.







Colonel-Commissar Ibram Gaunt, of the Tanith First by Anna Lakisova

THE ASTRA MILITARUM







The Astra Militarum

The Astra Militarum are the human heart of the Imperial war machine. Composed of billions of soldiers fighting on the countless warfronts of the Imperium of Man, the Astra Militarum are about as close as it gets to an 'everyman' in Warhammer 40,000. They are 'ordinary' human beings, existing in an extraordinary universe. This makes Astra Militarum characters arguably some of the most relatable in Warhammer 40,000, which is something that we bear in mind when it comes to cover art. Though artwork for Astra Militarum novels often (and rightfully) depicts large and desperate battles, it is the soldiers at the heart of those battles who are the true focus of the cover, much as they are in the novels themselves. This direction applies to all Astra Militarum novel covers, from the

wryly observed adventures of Ciaphas Cain, to the emotional roller coaster that is Gaunt's Ghosts. It always comes back to character.

The other major linking aspect of Astra Militarum covers is the use of colour. There is little in the way of primary, heraldic colours here. Instead, the colours are earthy, dark and largely desaturated, with the most intense hues coming from the setting around the characters, as opposed to the characters themselves. This is a subtle choice, but one that can be traced back to that core idea that the Astra Militarum are 'ordinary' individuals in extraordinary circumstances. And that's what makes them both incredibly brave, and enduringly popular.







CASE STUDY

The Warmaster

The cover for *The Warmaster* was a critically important project. Coming six years after the previous novel in the Gaunt's Ghosts series (2011's *Salvation's Reach*), we wanted to create an image for the cover that would allow for a modern take on the established series design that would engage both new and existing readers – one that felt both fresh *and* familiar. So we opted for a powerful, focused image of the character whose name the series bears – Colonel-Commissar Ibram Gaunt.

Gaunt has been represented at least a dozen times on book covers over Black Library's history, but we were keen for this portrait to be the new 'definitive' image of the character. This meant working closely with the series' author, Dan Abnett, to ensure the brief captured not just Gaunt's physical characteristics, but his demeanour too. The latter is especially important when commissioning character-focused works like this – what the subject's *personality* is like matters almost

as much as their physical appearance. With Gaunt, that meant getting across a noble and just sort of character. Scarred, but steadfast. Gaunt had to look like a hero, but one whose appearance reflected the triumphs and traumas he has experienced in order to get to where he is.

Aaron Griffin's cover artwork perfectly balances those qualities, presenting a stoic image of Gaunt that evokes a sense of war-weariness that feels heroic. Having Gaunt's face tilted slightly upwards conveys a defiance that is reinforced by Gaunt's scarring and the intensity in his augmented eyes, an aspect of the image that Aaron enhances through his use of lighting. By casting a band of light across Gaunt's face, the viewer's eyes are drawn to meet Gaunt's, creating an emotional connection with the character for new and existing readers alike, and an unquestionably definitive image, to boot.



CASE STUDY

Anarch

Anarch presented an interesting prospect in that it was effectively a 'twinned' cover with *The Warmaster*. As this was the final book in 'The Victory' arc of Gaunt's Ghosts, with extremely strong ties to the book that preceded it, we wanted to make the cover feel like a natural successor to *The Warmaster*.

With this in mind, we chose to focus *Anarch* not just on Gaunt this time, but on one of the series' key antagonists – the Chaos warlord Anakwanar Sek.

Capturing Chaos characters is often tricky. Defining something inherently makes it comprehensible, which can mean the character themselves becomes less scary as a result. This meant we approached illustrating Sek in a very different way than we did Gaunt – as opposed to dealing in definitives, illustrating Sek became about retaining the appropriate degree of mystery.

There is one existing image of Sek (below), which was originally presented in the first

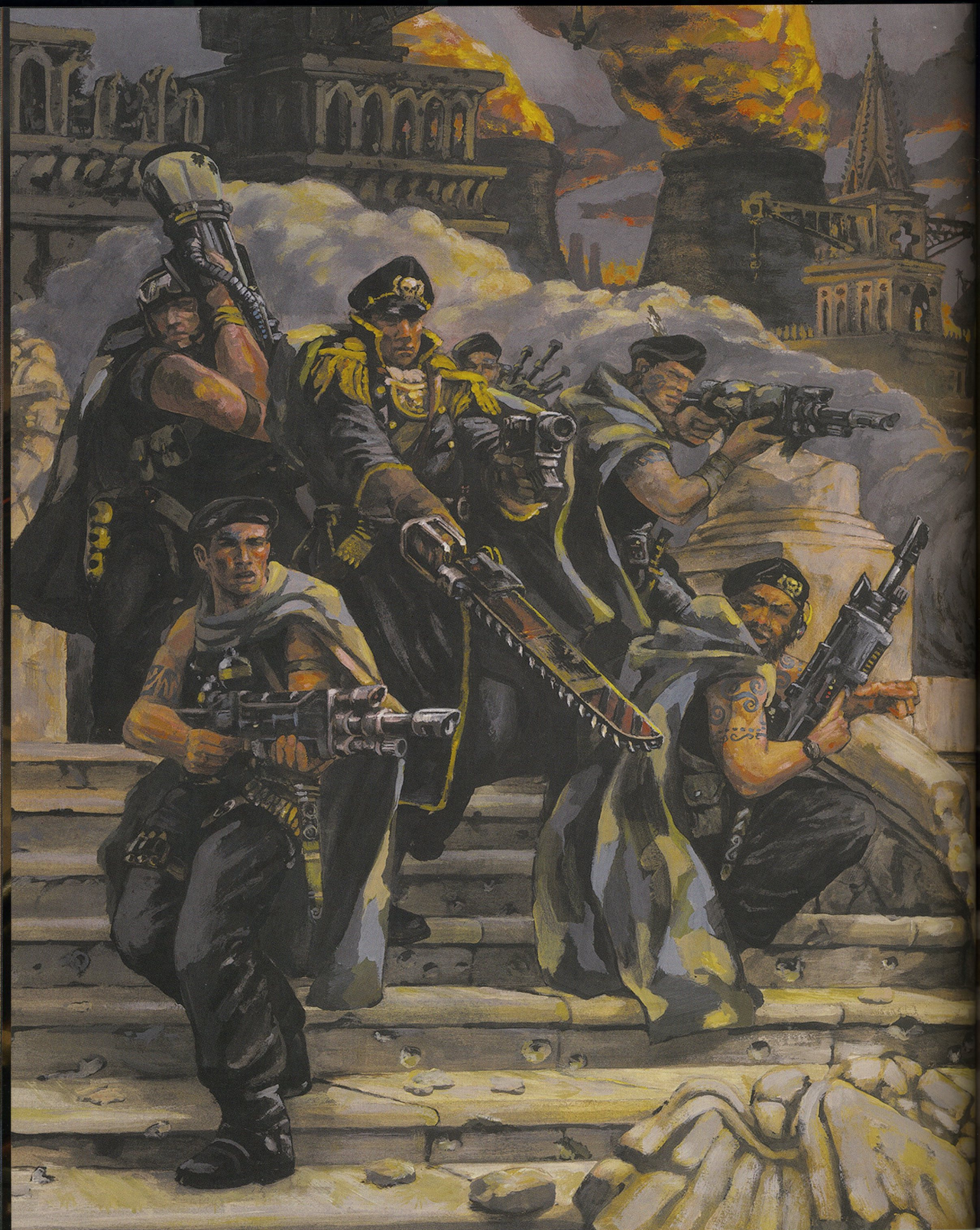
edition of the *Sabbat Worlds Crusade* background book (printed in 2005). We used this image for key visual cues – Sek's build, and the ghoulish theatrical mask he wears, but we also deliberately strayed from some of those visuals, too, meaning that there is no one definite image of Sek. This choice extends beyond the cover of *Anarch* to the new edition of the *Sabbat Worlds Crusade* background book (2019), where Sek is again represented variably – capturing the changeable nature of Chaos, and those who serve it.

Johan Grenier's cover for *Anarch* feels both stylistically and thematically complementary to Aaron Griffin's cover for *The Warmaster*. It develops upon the previous image of Gaunt, taking into account the way the character changes over the course of the previous novel, and offers a truly grisly look at one of his foremost adversaries that's rich with unsettling detail.











First and Only (re-imagined) by Mikhail Savier. Mikhail Savier's new iteration of the first edition cover for *First and Only* is a creative reimagining of Kenson Lowe's 1999 artwork, intended to put a new spin on the classic illustration. Savier's striking and finely detailed interpretation draws on the recent depictions of Gaunt and his Ghosts, while still entirely capturing the key visual touchstones, and more importantly, the feeling of the original – the heroic figure of Colonel-Commissar Ibram Gaunt leading the courageous Tanith First and Only into the heart of battle.

























PHROI
2014



CASE STUDY

Honourbound / Severina Raine miniature

Commissars make for interesting protagonists. Serving as officer, soldier, judge and jury, their unique role and relationship with the Astra Militarum regiments they serve with has made them core to Black Library's catalogue since the early days of Warhammer 40,000 publishing. Every character is very different, their stories varying widely in tone, scale and theme, and their cover illustrations and series designs reflect this.

The cover for *Honourbound* had to do the complex job of representing a familiar

character type in a new and unique way, as well as establishing a mood, tone and look for Severina Raine and the setting she serves in, the Bale Stars.

In this regard, Marc Lee's cover artwork for *Honourbound* serves as a statement of intent. A bold, iconic image that captures the main character in incredible detail, creating a new and striking visual spin on one of Black Library's most well-developed, and well-loved archetypes.

“When I was tasked with making the miniature for Severina Raine I knew it had to be something special. After investigating a few poses that would be in keeping with her battlefield role and no-nonsense attitude, I decided to use a pose that was very faithful to the book cover art. The artist had already done a great job of representing her so all I changed was to add the family heirloom pocket watch as this is a vital piece of her story.

As Severina Raine had never had a miniature before I was free to develop some of her iconography and other details (for example the 11th Antari Rifles regiment icon on her epaulette, her medals and the hilt of her sword, which are all mostly hidden in the cover artwork). I spoke with the author to get more of an idea of how she had imagined details like the Raine family crest whilst writing

the book; this was a great resource and also allowed me to ask more questions about the world the character inhabited.

I really wanted her to stand out and in order to do this I tried to increase the details generally across the whole miniature. As part of this I researched actual historical and contemporary military clothing and equipment. I think this is evident mostly in her coat and boots; the boots have a really unique look and the coat has a lot of attention paid to the seams. I also looked closely at how the different fabrics all behaved – the sash is much lighter material and creases a lot as it blows in the wind whereas her coat is big, heavy material and hardly creases at all.

Mike Fores, Sculptor









CASE STUDY

Cadian Honour

An informal follow-up to *Cadia Stands*, Justin D Hill's *Cadian Honour* focuses on the troops of the Cadian 101st as they come to terms with the loss of their home world at the hands of the Warmaster of Chaos, Abaddon the Despoiler. It is a novel with tragedy at its core – the loss of Cadia shook Warhammer 40,000 to its foundations, not least for those charged with defending it, but *Cadian Honour* is also a novel about the defiance and determination of the Cadians in the face of that tragedy, and we wanted to firmly reflect that on the cover.

We chose to take a different approach in terms of style and composition from *Cadia Stands*, focusing on one of *Cadian Honour*'s chief protagonists, who not only leads the story but who also feels representative of the

aforementioned themes – the young squad sergeant Minka Lesk, who is brought to defiant life by cover artist Darren Tan. Lesk dominates the frame, her violet eyes fixed on the viewer – even bloodied and bruised she looks determined, and resilient. Lesk's troopers are wounded and bandaged, their flak armour battered, filthy and scratched, but their posture is upright and strong. They are marching towards the viewer, their banner held high. Despite being a tightly focused cover, *Cadian Honour* is a very resonant one. Darren's high-fidelity, high-detail artwork makes Lesk and her troopers feel real, creating an instant connection between the reader and the characters, and instantly conveying the mood and tone of the novel.



The Last Chancers: Armageddon Saint by Darren Tan. The Last Chancers are unlikely heroes. They are criminals to a soul, offered a chance at a last bloody redemption through service in the 13th Penal Legion under the cruel eyes of Colonel Schaeffer. When commissioning the cover for *Armageddon Saint* we wanted to wholly embrace that concept, and the occasionally wry and irreverent tone of the novels by approaching the return of Lieutenant Kage and Colonel Schaeffer as a tongue-in-cheek spin on an action movie poster. Darren Tan's cover artwork captures this intent perfectly, depicting Kage and Schaeffer surrounded on all sides by a horde of orks, backlit by a cinematic explosion that seems to serve as a stand-in Imperial halo for the twice-reprimanded criminal Lieutenant Kage. An unlikely halo, for an unlikely hero.









CASE STUDY

Ciaphas Cain: Choose Your Enemies

The Ciaphas Cain series occupies a niche all of its own within the Warhammer 40,000 setting. Sandy Mitchell's novels are imbued with a wry sense of wit and a particular, irreverent tone, and Commissar Cain himself is at once self-preserving and heroic. With *Choose Your Enemies* coming a few years after the previous novel in the series (*The Greater Good*, 2013), we wanted to ensure that the cover artwork for *Choose Your Enemies* not only captured the essence of the character for existing fans, but conveyed the tone of the books to new readers too.

We decided to approach the cover for *Choose Your Enemies* through a propaganda-like filter, but with a twist. The artwork was commissioned as a wraparound piece, with both a front and back cover. On the front cover, Cain is shown with a smug, self-satisfied expression, almost posing in front of a regimental

standard that obscures the devastation done to his surroundings. On the reverse of the cover are Cain's regiment – the Valhallan 597th. Cain's troopers are depicted grittily, showing signs of battle damage and injury, with the terrain around them pockmarked by gunfire and defaced by the forces of Chaos.

Vladimir Krisetskiy's artwork is richly detailed and complex, portraying the Valhallans cast in shadow, their uniforms rendered in earthy, desaturated tones while Commissar Cain stands out in all his finery in rich, saturated colours. But it is Cain's facial expression that brings the piece together, setting it apart from other Astra Militarum novels. Vladimir's rendering of Cain's countenance is utterly emblematic of the character – a perfect example of how Cain might actively present himself as the 'Hero of the Imperium' that he is perceived to be.













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